

THE HAND OF

FATE



JUNE
10c

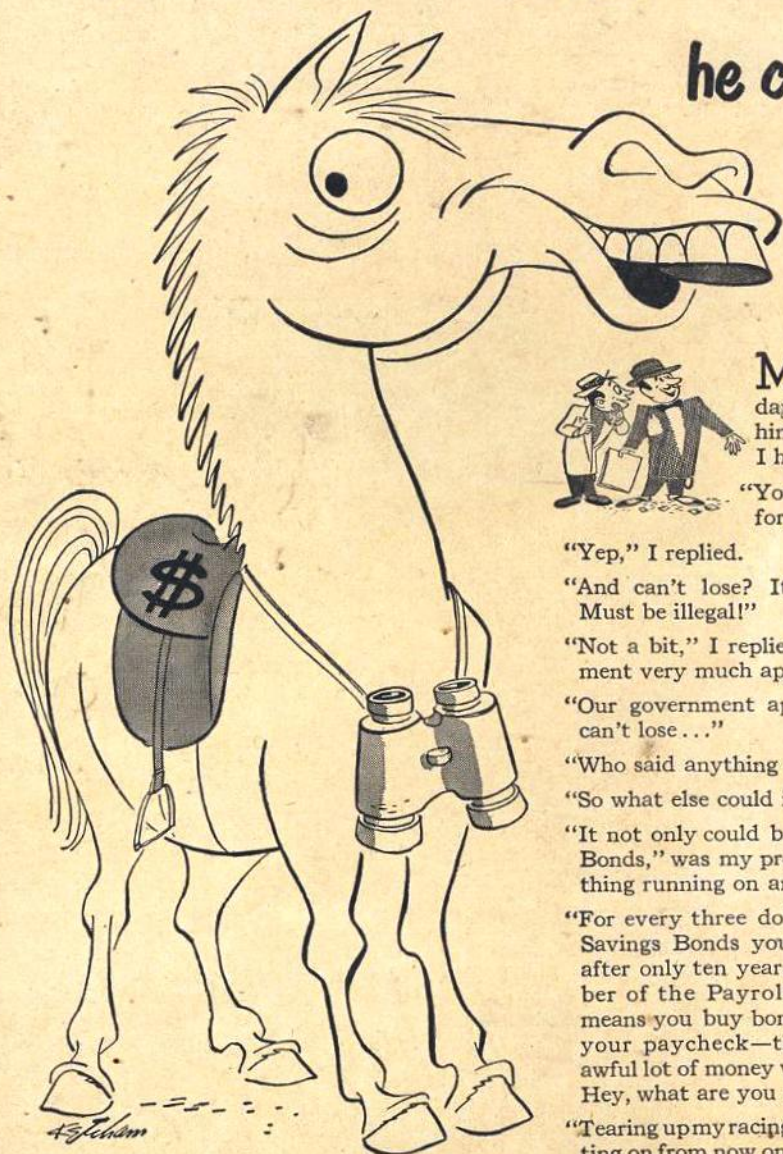
FOOLS! NOW THAT I AM
FREED FROM THAT CURSED
MANDARIN'S CHEST, I SHALL
REVENGE MYSELF ON ALL
MORTALS... AND YOU
SHALL BE FIRST!





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"There's no such animal," he cried!



MY FRIEND and I were picking the ponies one day when I started telling him about a *sure thing* I heard about.

"You say it pays four bucks for every three?" he asked.

"Yep," I replied.

"And can't lose? It *automatically* wins? Must be illegal!"

"Not a bit," I replied. "In fact, the government very much approves..."

"Our government approves of a horse who can't lose..."

"Who said anything about a horse?" I asked.

"So what else could it be but a horse...?"

"It not only could be—but is—U. S. Savings Bonds," was my prompt reply. "The surest thing running on any track today.

"For every three dollars you invest in U. S. Savings Bonds you get four dollars back after only ten years. And if you're a member of the Payroll Savings Plan—which means you buy bonds *automatically* from your paycheck—that can amount to an awful lot of money when you're not looking. Hey, what are you doing?"

"Tearing up my racing form! The horse I'm betting on from now on is U. S. Savings Bonds."

Automatic saving is sure saving—U.S. Savings Bonds



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ROOTS of the EVIL TREE





NOTICE THE WEIRD, ALMOST HUMAN-SHAPED OUTLINE OF EXECUTION TREE, WHICH I DECIDED TO PLAY A STRANGE PART IN THE FATE OF KURT COLEMAN...

MISSED HIM! BUT HE WON'T GET AWAY! I'LL ORGANIZE A MAN-HUNT IMMEDIATELY!

THEY'LL NEVER TAKE ME ALIVE!



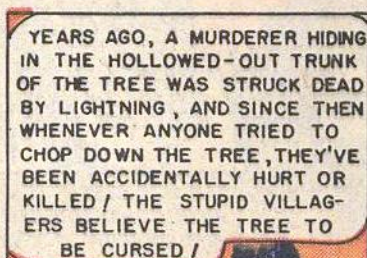
WE'VE SCoured THE TOWN AND HAVEN'T FOUND HIM! HE MUST BE HIDING OUT IN THE NEARBY HILLS! LET'S HEAD THAT WAY!

GOOD, YOU FOOLS! THAT WILL GIVE ME A CHANCE TO RETURN HOME FOR MY ARTIST'S TOOLS!

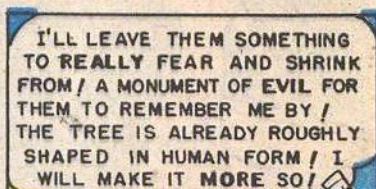


AND SO, KURT COLEMAN RETURNED HOME, PACKED AND PREPARED TO FLEE THE TOWN BUT THEN, AS HE STARED AT THE GAUNT, HUMAN-SHAPED TREE, THE HAND OF FATE BEGAN TO PLAY ITS DEVIANT ROLE...

THE VILLAGERS CALL IT EXECUTION TREE! THEY'VE BUILT UP A LEGEND OF SUPERSTITIONS ABOUT IT! I'VE GOT AN IDEA!



YEARS AGO, A MURDERER HIDING IN THE HOLLOWED-OUT TRUNK OF THE TREE WAS STRUCK DEAD BY LIGHTNING, AND SINCE THEN WHENEVER ANYONE TRIED TO CHOP DOWN THE TREE, THEY'VE BEEN ACCIDENTALLY HURT OR KILLED! THE STUPID VILLAGERS BELIEVE THE TREE TO BE CURSED!



I'LL LEAVE THEM SOMETHING TO REALLY FEAR AND SHRINK FROM! A MONUMENT OF EVIL FOR THEM TO REMEMBER ME BY! THE TREE IS ALREADY ROUGHLY SHAPED IN HUMAN FORM! I WILL MAKE IT MORE SO!



I'VE DONE MUCH WOOD CARVING AS A HOBBY, BUT NEVER ANYTHING LIKE THIS! IT'S A MASTERPIECE OF HORROR! IT LOOKS ALMOST ALIVE!



THERE! FINISHED JUST BEFORE THAT ELECTRICAL STORM IS ABOUT TO BREAK! THE CURSED TOWNSPEOPLE WILL HAVE THE FRIGHT OF THEIR LIVES WHEN THEY CRINGE FROM THAT MONSTROSITY!

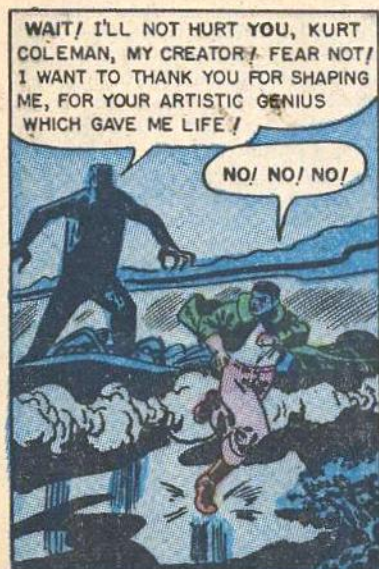


I WAITED TOO LONG! THE STORM HAS STARTED! GOOD GRIEF! LIGHTNING HAS STRUCK MY WORK OF ART-- MY TREE MONSTER! ALL MY TIME AND EFFORT FOR NOTHING!



BUT KURT COLEMAN WAS WRONG! HIS WORK HAD BEEN DONE TOO WELL! AS LIGHTNING CRASHED AROUND THE UPROOTED WOODEN IMAGE.

ARE MY EYES DECEIVING ME? THE THING IS COMING TO LIFE! IT-IT'S MOVING, RISING UP!



WAIT! I'LL NOT HURT YOU, KURT COLEMAN, MY CREATOR! FEAR NOT! I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR SHAPING ME, FOR YOUR ARTISTIC GENIUS WHICH GAVE ME LIFE!

NO! NO! NO!



I WON'T HARM YOU, KURT! WE ARE KINDRED SOULS! WE HAVE BOTH LONG BEEN THE OBJECT OF HATE AND LOATHING AND SUSPICION BY THE FOOLISH PEOPLE OF THIS VILLAGE!

Y-YES, THAT IS TRUE!



COME WITH ME! BE NOT AFRAID! I'LL AVENGE US BOTH FOR THE THINGS THE PEOPLE HAVE THOUGHT AND SAID ABOUT US! I'LL DESTROY THEM ALL!

I-I'VE GOT TO GET AWAY FROM THIS MONSTER!



HA/ HA/ LOOK AT IT! MY CREATION CAUSING A HOLOCAUST OF DESTRUCTION!

EEEEEEEEEEYIIII! A MOVING, LIVING WOODEN MONSTER! WHERE DID IT COME FROM? IT WILL MURDER US ALL!



KURT THOUGHT HE HAD SEEN THE LAST OF THE CREATION OF HIS EVIL GENIUS. BUT FATE DID NOT INTEND IT SO...

THEY'VE SHOT DOWN THE TREE-MONSTER! NOW THAT IT HAS WRECKED ITS VENGEANCE ON THE TOWNSFOLK, I'M GLAD! I WAS AFRAID OF IT, MYSELF!



LOOKS LIKE THEY'VE CHOPPED UP THE TREE-MONSTER AND ARE BURNING THE PIECES! THIS THROUGH-FREIGHT WILL SPEED ME TO ONE OF THE GREAT CITIES UP NORTH!



BUT BY A QUIRK OF FATE, UNKNOWN TO KURT COLEMAN, HIS VICTIM, ALICIA, DID NOT DIE FROM HIS STRANGLER'S ATTACK. A FEW DAYS AFTER KURT FLED TOWN...

I SHOULDN'T HAVE COME THIS WAY, WHERE I HAVE TO PASS THE COLEMAN HOUSE. I-- OOOOH! THAT-- THAT TREE-MONSTER! MY IMAGINATION MUST BE PLAYING TRICKS!

ALICIA!



HELP!
HELP!

DON'T RUN, ALICIA! KURT LOVED YOU, SO I CANNOT HARM YOU! AND IF HE HADN'T GOTTEN INTO TROUBLE OVER YOU, HE MIGHT NOT HAVE CARVED ME INTO LIFE!

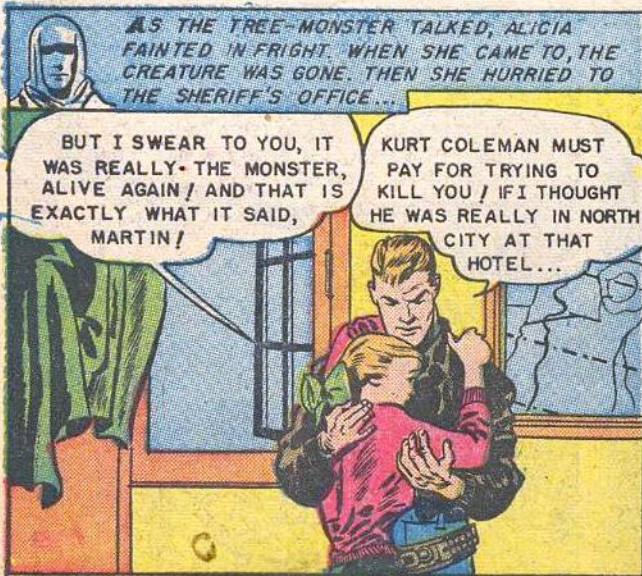


BUT-- BUT THE VILLAGERS BURNED YOU, DESTROYED YOU! HOW-- HOW CAN YOU STILL EXIST?

THEY FAILED TO DESTROY THE SOURCE OF MY LIFE! I AM NOT HUMAN, TO BE DESTROYED SO EASILY! LISTEN TO ME!



I KNOW WHERE KURT, MY CREATOR, IS HIDING! HE'S IN THE HOTEL METROPOLE IN NORTH CITY! I SHALL GO TO HIM AND TELL HIM YOU STILL LIVE! PERHAPS THEN HE WILL RETURN HERE AND YOU WILL FORGIVE HIM AND LEARN TO CARE FOR HIM! THAT WOULD MAKE ME VERY HAPPY!



AS THE TREE-MONSTER TALKED, ALICIA FAINTED IN FRIGHT. WHEN SHE CAME TO, THE CREATURE WAS GONE. THEN SHE HURRIED TO THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE...

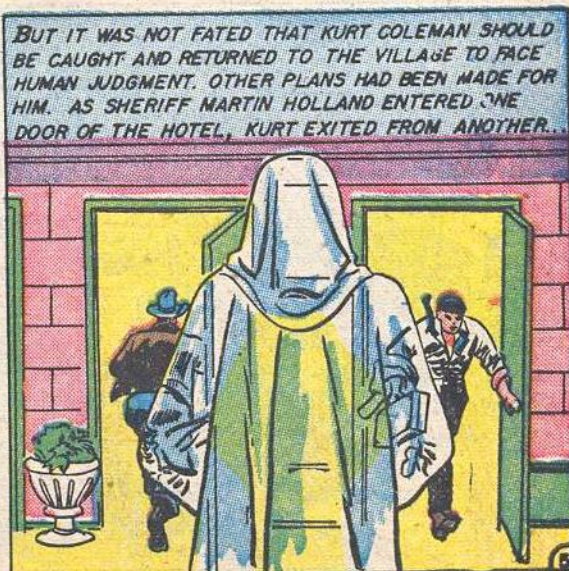
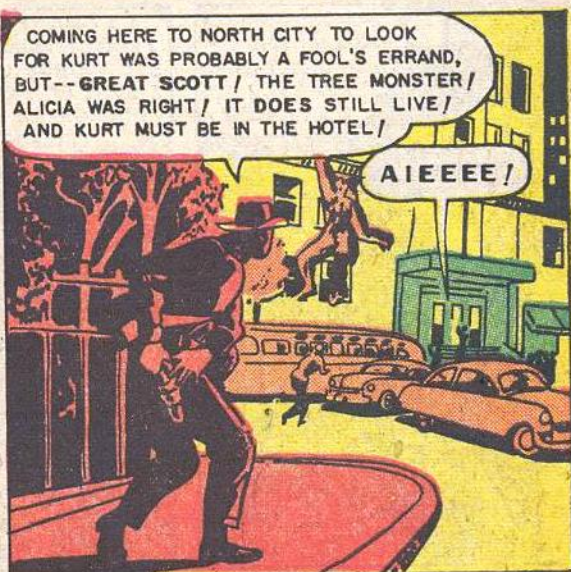
BUT I SWEAR TO YOU, IT WAS REALLY THE MONSTER, ALIVE AGAIN! AND THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT IT SAID, MARTIN!

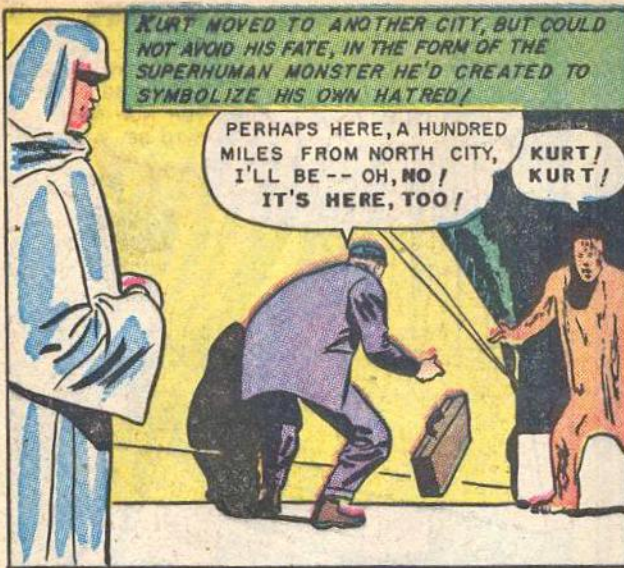
KURT COLEMAN MUST PAY FOR TRYING TO KILL YOU! IF I THOUGHT HE WAS REALLY IN NORTH CITY AT THAT HOTEL...



THE NEXT DAY, IN NORTH CITY, KURT CONTINUED TO FEEL SMUGLY SECURE, LITTLE KNOWING THAT THE HAND OF FATE AGAIN HOVERED OVER HIM...

NO CHANCE OF ANYBODY FROM THAT STUPID VILLAGE EVER FINDING ME NOW! BUT WHAT IS THAT SCRATCHING NOISE I HEAR OUTSIDE THE WINDOW?





KURT MOVED TO ANOTHER CITY, BUT COULD NOT AVOID HIS FATE, IN THE FORM OF THE SUPERHUMAN MONSTER HE'D CREATED TO SYMBOLIZE HIS OWN HATRED!

PERHAPS HERE, A HUNDRED MILES FROM NORTH CITY, I'LL BE -- OH, NO! IT'S HERE, TOO!

KURT!
KURT!



HE CAN'T FOLLOW ME THROUGH THIS SMALL OPENING! I MUST BE FREE OF HIM!



A MONSTROUS ARM AFTER THAT CRAZY LOOKING GUY! EIEEEEEE!



I (PUFF-PUFF) FINALLY ELUDED HIM! BUT FOR HOW LONG? WILL I EVER BE SAFE FROM THAT GREAT WOODEN FIEND?



KURT'S QUESTIONS WERE ANSWERED IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS AND NIGHTS. CONSTANTLY ON THE MOVE, ASLEEP OR AWAKE, HE KEPT SEEING THE HIDEOUS FORM OF HIS HORRENDOUS CREATION. IT DROVE HIM NEARLY MAD!



STOP RUNNING FROM ME, KURT! YOU CAN'T ESCAPE ME FOREVER! WE NEED EACH OTHER!

IT'S AFTER ME AGAIN! I'VE GOT TO FIGURE SOME WAY TO DESTROY THE MONSTER, FOREVER! I MADE IT, SO, SOMEHOW, I MUST HAVE THE POWER TO GET RID OF IT, TOO!



TAKE ME TO THE RAILROAD STATION! FAST!

A LITTLE LATER, AS KURT COLEMAN RODE AN EXPRESS TRAIN BACK TOWARD THE VILLAGE WHERE THE TREE-MONSTER WAS CREATED, THE FINAL, FATEFUL IDEA STRUCK HIS MIND.

I'VE GOT IT! NOW I KNOW HOW TO DESTROY THAT AWESOME GIANT FOREVER!

THE WHOLE VILLAGE IS SLEEPING! THERE WILL BE NOBODY TO DISTURB ME AT MY WORK! AND WHAT I AM ABOUT TO DO HAS GOT TO BE THE ANSWER!

JUST AS I FIGURED-- THE ROOTS OF THE OLD TREE STILL LIVE/AS LONG AS THAT IS SO, THE MONSTER WILL COME INTO BEING AGAIN AND AGAIN, NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES IT SEEMS TO BE DESTROYED!



THESE LIVE ROOTS WERE THE SOURCE OF THE TREE-MONSTER'S LIFE! BUT WHEN I'VE DESTROYED THEM ALL, THE CREATURE WILL NOT COME INTO EXISTENCE AGAIN!



FINISHED! THE ROOTS ARE DESTROYED AND SO IS MY MAD CREATION! IT WAS DURING AN ELECTRIC STORM THAT HE WAS BROUGHT INTO BEING, AND THE LIGHTNING SLASHES AND SMOKES AGAIN AS HE DIES--FOREVER!



BUT KURT COLEMAN FORGOT THAT THE STEEL AXE HE HELD WAS LIKE A MAGNET TO THE DEADLY ELECTRICAL FLASHES! AND SO IT WAS NOT FATED THAT HE SHOULD ENJOY HIS FREEDOM FROM THE MONSTER HE HAD CREATED!



THE NEXT MORNING, HORROR-STRUCK VILLAGERS NAMELY VIEWED THE STRANGE AND UNEXPLAINABLE FINAL FATE OF KURT COLEMAN!

THE EXECUTION TREE-- GROWN BACK IN ITS OLD PLACE! HOW CAN THAT BE, MARTIN?

WE'LL PROBABLY NEVER KNOW! BUT IT'S LIVED UP TO ITS NAME, AND CLAIMED ANOTHER CRIMINAL VICTIM WHO TAMPERED WITH IT AND TEMPTED FATE!



A Hand of FATE *Mystery*

#7

FOR SEVERAL GENERATIONS, ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS OF TRAPEZE ARTISTS WAS THE RIZZONI FAMILY. THEIR POPULARITY EXISTED WHEREVER THE CIRCUS IN WHICH THEY PERFORMED MADE ITS APPEARANCE. ONE EVENING IN 1937, ANGELO RIZZONI AND HIS SISTER FLORA, LAST OF THEIR FAMILY LINE, WERE DOING THEIR HAZARDOUS ACT IN BOSTON, HIGH ABOVE THE ADMIRING CROWD, WITH NO NET BENEATH THEM, MAKING THEIR PERFORMANCE DOUBLY SPINE-CHILLING...

AS USUAL, FLORA LEAPED FROM HER SWINGING BAR, TOWARD HER BROTHER'S OUTSTRETCHED AND WAITING HANDS...



BUT SOMETHING WENT WRONG! FLORA MISSED HER TIMING, AND COULD NOT REACH ANGELO'S HANDS!



FLORA WAS RUSHED TO THE HOSPITAL, WHERE SHE HOVERED BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH, HER BODY BROKEN BY THE FALL. THE FOLLOWING NIGHT, ANGELO PREPARED TO DO A SOLO ACT ON THE HIGH TRAPEZE. BUT, AS HE LOOKED OVER TOWARD THE OPPOSITE PLATFORM...



JUST AS THE NIGHT BEFORE, ANGELO REACHED OUT TO GRASP HIS SISTER'S ARMS...



REACHING OUT DESPERATELY FOR FLORA'S ARMS, HE WAS HORRIFIED TO SEE THEM DISAPPEAR SUDDENLY! HE LOST HIS LEG GRIP, AND...



THE CIRCUS MANAGER RUSHED TO ANGELO'S SIDE...

I... I SAW MY SISTER UP THERE! I LOST MY BALANCE... TRYING TO REACH HER... I SAW HER UP THERE...

IMPOSSIBLE, ANGELO! I JUST RECEIVED A CALL FROM THE HOSPITAL... FLORA DIED A FEW MINUTES AGO, JUST AS YOU STARTED YOUR SOLO ACT! SHE NEVER LEFT THE HOSPITAL!



WHO CAN EXPLAIN THIS BIZARRE INCIDENT? DID FLORA'S SPIRIT RETURN TO THE CIRCUS ARENA TO BRING HER BROTHER AFTER HER, INTO THE VALLEY OF THE DEAD IN THE BEYOND? WHAT DO YOU THINK, READERS?

The End

the **FINAL** Curtain

THE WORLD BEHIND THE FOOTLIGHTS IS OFTEN AS UNREAL AS THE PAINTED SCENERY ON STAGE, BUT INTENSELY REAL ARE THE PASSIONS AND AMBITIONS OF THE ACTORS WHO LIVE FOR FAME AND PUBLIC RECOGNITION. BUT FOR HUGO MORRISEY, IT WAS MORE THAN AMBITION. HE POSSESSED A FAME-HUNGER WHICH CORRUPTED EVERY DECENT FIBER OF HIS MIND AND FILLED HIM WITH AN UNSCRUPULOUS LUST FOR STARDOM, EVEN CHALLENGING HIS OWN FATE TO SEE HIS NAME IN GLITTERING LIGHTS.

LISTEN TO THE FOOLS APPLAUD BURKE! HE PLAYED HAMLET LIKE A WEAK, SIMPERING IDIOT--YET THEY CHEER HIM! I, WHO WAS RAISED ON SHAKESPEARE, AM GIVEN A MINOR ROLE! WHY, IF I PLAYED THE PRINCE, I WOULD TEAR THEIR HEARTS OUT! HOW I HATE BURKE! IF HE WERE ELIMINATED, NOTHING COULD STOP ME FROM TAKING HIS PLACE!



AS HUGO TURNED IN DISGUST, SUDDENLY...

YOUR THOUGHTS ARE MURDEROUS, HUGO MORRISEY! AND THOUGHTS SOMETIMES BECOME DEEDS! I WARN YOU...YOU MUST NOT INTERFERE WITH THE DESTINY OF OTHERS!

WH—WHO ARE YOU? HOW DO YOU KNOW MY NAME AND READ MY MIND?



I AM THE ETERNAL RECORD OF EACH MAN'S TWISTINGS AND TURNINGS THROUGH LIFE! MEN CALL ME FATE!

HA, YOU'RE NOT EVEN A GOOD ACTOR! GET OUT OF MY WAY, YOU CHEAP COSTUME HORROR, OR I'LL RUN YOU THROUGH!



ANGER FLOODED HUGO'S BRAIN AS HE DREW HIS SWORD AND THRUST...

THIS WILL TEACH YOU TO BAIT ME! WHAT! IT'S GONE-- MELTED AWAY!

HUGO, YOU ARE A VIOLENT MAN! REMEMBER, VIOLENCE BEGETS VIOLENCE! THE SEEDS OF YOUR DESTINY HAVE ALREADY BEEN SOWN THIS NIGHT!



AS SUDDENLY AS IT HAD APPEARED, FATE VANISHED!

I WOULD HAVE SWORN IT WAS A SHAM, A CHEAP TRICK... BUT NOW I DON'T KNOW! BAH, WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE! I BELIEVE IN CARVING OUT MY OWN DESTINY!



BACKSTAGE, AS PRAISE WAS SHOWERED ON BURKE...

SYDNEY, YOU WERE MAGNIFICENT! THERE NEVER WAS A HAMLET LIKE YOURS IN NEW YORK!

AND THERE WON'T BE FOR LONG, IF I HAVE MY WAY! LOOK AT THE WAY THEY BASK IN HIS LIMELIGHT, FEELING IMPORTANT BY ASSOCIATION! HOW THEY SICKEN ME, THE INCOMPETENTS!



BURKE LIVES IN THE SUBURBS AND DRIVES TO THE THEATRE EVERY NIGHT... I MUST MAKE IT LOOK LIKE AN ACCIDENT AND AVOID SUSPICION!



A FEW DAYS LATER, AT THE GARAGE OF BURKE'S HOME...

A FEW MORE TURNS AND BURKE'S TRIP TO THE THEATRE TONIGHT WILL END IN DEATH! HE'S A FAST DRIVER AND ONE SHARP CURVE SHOULD MAKE THIS CAR HIS HEARSE!



TONIGHT I SHALL SHED BITTER CROCODILE TEARS WHEN BURKE'S DEMISE IS ANNOUNCED! WHAT AN ACTOR I SHALL BE! AND THEN... HAMLET-- THE PRINCE, THE ENVIED ROLE OF EVERY DRAMATIC ACTOR, WILL BE MINE!



SUDDENLY...

YOU, AGAIN? WHY DO YOU PLAGUE ME? WHAT DO YOU WANT?

FOOLISH MORTAL! THE ROAD YOU ARE TAKING WILL ONLY HASTEN YOUR OWN END! WHY ARE YOU NOT PATIENT? YOUR GREAT MOMENT WITH RICH REWARDS WILL SURELY COME!





IN A SPEEDING AMBULANCE, LEAVING THE MANGLED WRECK OF A CAR...

TELL... THE TROUPE I'M SORRY I COULDN'T MAKE IT!

EVEN IN DEATH, HIS THOUGHTS ARE UNSELFISH / HE WAS A GREAT ACTOR!

SHEER MELODRAMA! AS AN ACTOR, HE KNOWS HOW TO MAKE A FINAL CURTAIN SPEECH / HE DOESN'T MEAN A WORD OF IT!

COME AWAY! I WILL NOT HAVE YOU DISHONOR THE DEAD!

HUGO LOST CONSCIOUSNESS, AND THEN AWOKE WITH THE SENSATION OF FALLING...

WH- WHERE AM I? THIS ROOM... IT'S BURKE'S OWN DRESSING ROOM, AND MY HANDS ARE RED... AS IF DIPPED IN BLOOD!

YOUR HANDS ARE FOR- EVER DYED WITH GUILT!

ALL PLAYERS DOWN STAGE / ACT TWO, SCENE THREE COMING UP!

NOTHING BUT DYE... ANOTHER ONE OF YOUR STAGE PROPS! I HAVE NO TIME NOW TO WASH THEM, BUT LATER I WILL REMOVE YOUR LITTLE HOAX!

AS THE FINAL CURTAIN CAME DOWN...

YOU WERE TERRIFIC, ROBERT / TO TAKE OVER A MAJOR ROLE ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE IS AMAZING! MY CONGRATULATIONS!

THANK YOU / I KNOW IT DIDN'T COME NEAR SYDNEY'S PERFORMANCE, BUT WHEN I HEARD OF HIS DEATH, I TRIED WITH ALL MY HEART!

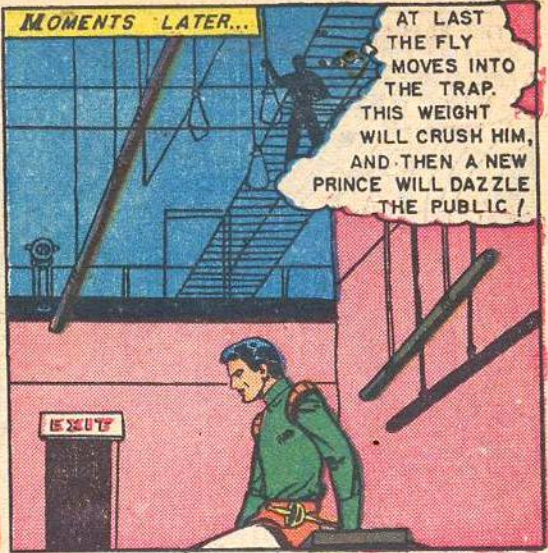
I KNOW I HAVE TO WORK ON MY PART, BUT I'LL REHEARSE DAY AND NIGHT UNTIL IT'S REALLY POLISHED / STARTING TOMORROW, I'LL BE IN THE THEATRE THREE HOURS BEFORE CURTAIN TIME!

HMMM, THEN HE'LL BE HERE ALONE / THAT MAKES MY PLANS ALL THE EASIER / IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE HAMLET NEEDS A NEW PRINCE!

BACK IN HUGO'S DRESSING ROOM...

CONFOUND IT! THE DYE WON'T WASH OFF / CURSE THAT HOODED SPECTRE FOR HIS GHOULISH PRANK! I'LL HAVE TO WEAR GLOVES UNTIL I CAN GET A SUITABLE CHEMICAL TO REMOVE IT!

HAMLET SET # 2





THE FLAMES DON'T BURN MY SKIN, BUT WITHIN ME A FIRE BURNS AT MY VITALS! AIEEEEE!

IT IS THE PURIFYING FIRE, BUT NOTHING WILL CLEANSE YOUR BLACKENED SOUL!



HUGO'S SENSES REELED...

BURKE--NEWCOMBE! WH--WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO BE DEAD!

THE WORLD OF THE SPIRIT IS NEVER DEAD! BUT YOU WILL NEVER RESIDE HERE, BECAUSE OF THE MONSTROUS CRIMES YOU HAVE COMMITTED! COME, WE MUST NOT DELAY! THE JUDGMENT IS READY!



HUGO MORRISEY, WE CONDEMN YOU TO THE HILL OF PERDITION! WHAT YOU TRULY WANT, WILL NEVER BE OBTAINED! YES, YOU WILL BE A STAR, BUT FOR ONE PERFORMANCE ONLY! YOU WILL MERELY TASTE THE SWEETNESS OF FAME, BUT ONLY BITTERNESS WILL FOLLOW!



AS FATE LED HUGO AWAY...

GREAT HEAVENS! WHAT IS THAT?

THE HILL OF PERDITION! THOSE MEN ARE EVERLASTINGLY CONDEMNED TO ROLLING THOSE STONES UP THE STEEP HILL!



TH--THEY'RE FALLING!

YES, THEIR AMBITION IS NEVER OBTAINED! OVER AND OVER AGAIN THEY ROLL THE STONES, AND PLUNGE HEAD-LONG DOWN! AND SOON, HUGO, YOU SHALL JOIN THEM!



WITH ABRUPT SUDDENNESS, FATE DEPARTED, LEAVING HUGO BEFORE THE THEATRE!

WH--WHERE AM I? IT'S THE THEATRE, AND MY NAME IN LIGHTS! THIS PART IS NO DREAM! AT LAST I HAVE ARRIVED!

HUGO MORRISEY IN HAMLET



ALL AT ONCE...

NOW WHAT HAVE THEY DONE? MY NAME IS BLACKED OUT! THEY CAN'T TORTURE ME LIKE THIS! TONIGHT I MUST PLAY THE PRINCE!

AS HUGO RUSHED UP TO THE STAGE...

A TERRIBLE ACCIDENT,
JUST WHEN HE WAS
MAKING A NAME FOR
HIMSELF! WHAT ARE WE
GOING TO DO NOW?

THE SHOW MUST
GO ON, FRIENDS,
AND I AM READY
TO TAKE THE ROLE
OF THE PRINCE
TONIGHT!

YES, YES, HUGO CAN
PLAY THE PRINCE!
COME, LET US HURRY!
CURTAIN TIME IS ONLY
AN HOUR AWAY!

YOU SHALL SEE
HAMLET TONIGHT AS
IT HAS NEVER BEEN
PLAYED BEFORE!
THE DEATHS OF MY
COLLEAGUES HAVE
MOVED ME WITH GREAT
TRAGIC FEELING!



HUGO PLAYED WITH IM-
PASSIONED FIRE, SWEEP-
ING THE AUDIENCE OFF
ITS FEET!

THIS IS WHAT I'VE LIVED FOR,
AND NOW MY DREAM HAS BEEN
REALIZED! THEY'RE CHEERING
ME, BUT THEY WILL RISE SHOUT-
ING FROM THEIR SEATS WHEN I
DUEL FOR MY LIFE IN THE
LAST ACT!



IN THE FINAL ACT, THE FOILS
WERE BLINDED, BUT IN THE
FRENZY OF THE DUEL...

HO, VILLAINY!
NOW MY SWORD
WILL END YOUR
TREACHEROUS
LIFE!

HUGO, HAVE YOU
GONE MAD?
WE'RE ONLY ACT-
ING THESE ROLES
... LOOK OUT! THE
BLIND OF MY FOIL
HAS BEEN KNOCKED
OFF!



HUGO, STAND CLEAR
OF MY FOIL!

AND SO
PREPARE FOR
DEATH...
EIEEEE!



PANIC OVERRAN THE STAGE!

HUGO'S DYING! RING
DOWN THE CURTAIN,
QUICKLY!

THE STONES...THE
STONES...I CAN'T
REACH THE TOP
OF THE HILL!
OHHHH!



YOU'RE TOO LATE, MR.
BONZELL! HOLLYWOOD
WILL NEVER GET HUGO!
HE'S DEAD!

AFTER SEEING HIS SUP-
PORTING PERFORMANCE
LAST MONTH, I WANTED TO
SIGN HIM TO A MAJOR CON-
TRACT! MY PLANE WAS
GROUNDED IN CHICAGO OVERNIGHT
AND I JUST ARRIVED... TOO
LATE! I GUESS THAT'S
FATE FOR YOU!



A Hand of FATE Mystery #8

IT WAS IN THE YEAR 1926 THAT THIS STRANGE INCIDENT OCCURRED. ROBERT SISTARE, AN AMERICAN AUTHORITY ON CHINESE HISTORY AND CULTURE, WAS TOURING CHINA. IN SHANGHAI, ONE DAY, HE CAME UPON A VERY OLD PAGODA THAT SERVED AS A TEMPLE FOR THE WORSHIPPERS OF BUDDHA. NO ONE WAS IN EVIDENCE AS HE ENTERED THE SHRINE...

SISTARE CAME UPON A DOOR WITHIN THE PAGODA, ON WHICH WERE INSCRIBED CHINESE CHARACTERS...

THIS SHOULDN'T BE VERY DIFFICULT TO TRANSLATE! LET ME SEE... "IT IS FORBIDDEN TO OPEN THIS DOOR! THAT WHICH IS WITHIN MUST NEVER BREATHE THE AIR OF FREE MORTALS!"



SISTARE USED A METAL ROD TO FORCE OPEN THE DOOR...

AH... THERE IT IS! NOW TO SEE WHAT "MYSTERY" LIES WITHIN THIS CHAMBER!



WHA...? AN OLD MAN... SITTING ALONE WITHIN THIS DARK ROOM!



AT LAST! SOMEONE HAS DONE THE FORBIDDEN! YOU HAVE BROUGHT WELCOME DEATH TO ME... EVEN NOW THE FRESH AIR ENTERS MY SEALED CHAMBER!



OVER A HUNDRED YEARS AGO, I WAS IMPRISONED IN THIS ROOM FOR DEFILING THE POWERS OF BUDDHA! IT WAS SAID I MUST CONTEMPLATE MY EVIL LIFE, UNTIL THE AIR OF FREE MORTALS SHOULD BRING ME FINAL RELEASE... IN DEATH!



AND BEFORE SISTARE'S HORRIFIED GAZE, THE OLD MAN WITHERED AWAY INTO A CADAVEROUS FIGURE, MORE THAN A HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS OLD!

HE'S DEAD! INCREDIBLE! WHO WOULD EVER BELIEVE SUCH A FANTASTIC STORY IF I TOLD THEM?



WHO, INDEED? AND YET, ROBERT SISTARE TOOK AN OATH THAT THIS WEIRD INCIDENT ACTUALLY HAPPENED TO HIM! JUST ANOTHER STRANGE OCCURRENCE NOW RECORDED IN THE ANNALS OF THE WORLD'S INEXPLICABLE MYSTERIES!

The Man who bought a GENIE

SOLD TO AUGUST RIDLEY--
THE ANTIQUE CHEST OF
THE "GENIE OF KUO!"

BAH / I DID NOT
BUY THE CHEST
BECAUSE I BELIEVED
IN GENII!

YOUNG MAN, DO NOT SCOFF / NEVER
OPEN THIS CHEST WHICH FATE HAS
FORCED THE LAST OF THE KUOS
TO SELL!

THERE IS A LEGEND WHICH TELLS US:
ALMOST 400 YEARS AGO, THE NOBLE
CHINESE MANDARIN KUO, CRAFTY AND
GREEDY, BETRAYED THE WOMAN WHO
LOVED HIM BY STEALING HER FORTUNE.
TO AVOID THE AVENGING FURY OF THIS
WOMAN'S ROYAL HOUSE, THE WILY
MANDARIN FASHIONED THE MOST RE-
MARKABLE CHEST EVER MADE. AND INTO
THIS CHEST HE TRICKED HIS NEMESIS,
THE GENIE GUARDIAN OF THE GIRL'S
HOUSEHOLD, SNAPPED SHUT THE LID
AND SEALED IT FOREVER WITH A GREAT
GOLDEN LOCK. BUT FOREVER IS A LONG
TIME IN THE BOOK OF FATE...

AND AFTER 400 YEARS, THE SCRIPT OF
FATE DECREED THAT THE GENIE'S CHEST
SHOULD PASS FROM THE KUOS INTO THE
HANDS OF AUGUST RIDLEY, OWNER OF A
CURIO SHOP...

IF I BETRAYED A FRIEND
OR THE WOMAN WHO LOVED
ME, I'D BE AFRAID OF
SOMETHING MORE REAL
THAN THE WRATH OF
A GENIE!

KUO ALSO
BETRAYED A
VERY GOOD
FRIEND / FOR YOUR
OWN SAKE, MAY YOU
BE A MORE HONORABLE
MAN THAN MY
ANCESTOR KUO!

A SHORT TIME LATER, IN THE BACK ROOM OF
RIDLEY'S CURIO SHOP...

SINCE THE OLD MANDARIN AND I DO
HAVE OUR BETRAYALS IN COMMON, THE
GENIE OUGHT TO FIND ME A GOOD
SUBSTITUTE FOR HIS AVENGING
FURY! HA-HA!

EVEN THEN, PERHAPS, IF RIDLEY HAD NOT TURNED HIS BACK ON THE CHEST FOR AN INSTANT, HE MIGHT HAVE SEEN THE GENIE IN TIME AND FEARED HIM ENOUGH TO AVERT HIS FATE!

EVEN IF I DON'T BELIEVE IN GENII, I DO THINK THERE MIGHT BE SOMETHING VALUABLE INSIDE THAT CHEST... A SECRET I OUGHT TO CONCEAL FROM MY CLERK!



THUS IT WAS THAT RIDLEY BEGAN TO MOVE IN STRANGE EVENTS. SLOWLY AT FIRST...

I DIDN'T TOUCH THE LID... YET THE CHEST IS OPEN!

YOU HAVE BOUGHT ME AT AUCTION! YOU HAVE BOUGHT THE GENIE OF KUO!



I'M SURE I HEARD A VOICE... BUT NO ONE IS HERE! AND NOTHING AT ALL IS IN THE CHEST!



DISBELIEVING IN THE GENIE, RIDLEY CHOSE THIS INSTANT TO MAKE A DANGEROUS ENTRY IN HIS DIARY...

Nothing unusual about hearing voices. Nervous tension makes one imagine many things! There is Annabelle - fortune to make me nervous. I'm obsessed with the idea. I'd do anything to get her money.

ANYTHING TO GET CONTROL INTO MY OWN HANDS. I'D MARRY HER, OF COURSE. EVEN KILL HER WITHOUT A REGRET!

AUGUST RIDLEY, LIKE THE MANDARIN KUO, REPAYS LOVE WITH GREED!

AUGUST, MAY I COME IN?



IT'S ANNABELLE / WHERE SHALL I HIDE THE DIARY?

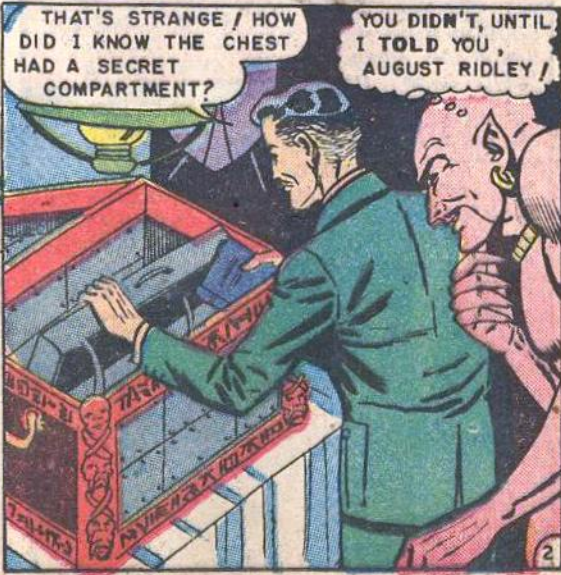
QUICKLY / INTO THE SECRET COMPARTMENT OF THE CHEST.

KNOCK KNOCK



THAT'S STRANGE / HOW DID I KNOW THE CHEST HAD A SECRET COMPARTMENT?

YOU DIDN'T, UNTIL I TOLD YOU, AUGUST RIDLEY!



NOT LONG BEFORE THIS MOMENT, RIDLEY AND ANNABELLE DEXTER HAD BECOME ENGAGED. ANNABELLE WAS MADLY IN LOVE WITH RIDLEY, AND RIDLEY WAS, OF COURSE, MADLY IN LOVE WITH ANNA-BELLE'S FORTUNE...

DARLING, I'M SO SORRY WE QUAR-RELLED THE OTHER DAY OVER MY STUPID FORTUNE!

I'M SORRY, TOO, ANNABELLE!

UNFORTUNATELY, IF YOU RETAIN TITLE TO YOUR FORTUNE, I'D ALWAYS FEEL LIKE THE POOR HUSBAND OF THE RICH MRS. RIDLEY. NEVERTHELESS, I'M WILLING TO SWALLOW MY PRIDE. DARLING, WILL YOU MARRY ME? SOON?



TONIGHT WILL BE A LOVELY TIME TO TALK ABOUT OUR FUTURE. BUT DON'T COME UNTIL NINE, BECAUSE UNTIL THEN I'LL BE...

JEREMY HALL!



AUGUST, YOU LOOK AS IF YOU'D SEEN A GHOST!

S-SORRY, ANNABELLE... SOMEONE I KNOW... MUST SEE HIM RIGHT AWAY!



BUT IT WAS NOT A GHOST THAT RIDLEY SAW. IT WAS JEREMY HALL, ONCE A FENCE FOR STOLEN GEMS, ONCE ALSO IN THE ORIENT, RIDLEY'S PARTNER IN CRIME...

HE'S FOUND ME! HE'LL KILL ME FOR DOUBLE-CROSSING HIM IN SHANGHAI, IF I DON'T GET TO HIM AND BUY HIM OFF!

AHA! RIDLEY HAS ALSO BETRAYED A FRIEND!



YOU'LL HAVE TO KILL HIM!

IT'S AN HALLUCINATION! I MUST BE SEEING THINGS... I'LL BUY HALL OFF!



YOU'LL HAVE TO KILL HIM, I SAY!

I'LL DO AS I DECIDE! I'LL BUY HIM OFF!

DON'T SHOUT, RIDLEY! PAYING OFF WITH \$50,000 IS FAR MORE SENSIBLE THAN TRYING TO KILL YOUR OLD PAL, JEREMY HALL!



HOW WELL THE GENIE KNEW THAT RIDLEY WOULD NOT HAVE ENOUGH CASH TO PAY OFF HALL... UNLESS, OF COURSE, ANNABELLE HELPED!

ON SECOND THOUGHT, MAKE IT \$75,000! AFTER ALL, IT WAS THE MONEY YOU STOLE FROM ME THAT GOT YOU STARTED HERE IN THE STATES IN AN HONEST AND PROFITABLE BUSINESS!

I-I HAVE TO HAVE A LITTLE TIME, JEREMY!



HOWEVER, RIDLEY WAS TO NEED LESS TIME THAN HE THOUGHT. THE GENIE'S AVENGING GENIUS WAS QUICKENING, AND ONCE BACK AT THE CURIO SHOP...

MISS DEXTER HAD ME SEND THE GENIE'S CHEST TO HER PLACE AS YOUR WEDDING PRESENT TO HER! CONGRATULATIONS, SIR-- SHE'LL MAKE A FINE WIFE!

WHAT!



FASTER BEAT THE TEMPO OF THE GENIE'S FURY!

YOU FOOL! GET THE CHEST BACK! SHE MUST NOT HAVE THAT CHEST!

BUT--UH--THE TRUCK HAS ALREADY DELIVERED IT, SIR!



AND STILL AUGUST RIDLEY THOUGHT THAT HE WAS MASTER OF HIS OWN FATE!

BUT, ANNABELLE, YOU SHOULD HAVE ASKED ME FIRST! I MUST HAVE THE CHEST BACK IMMEDIATELY... IT'S PROMISED TO A CUSTOMER!

TELL HER YOU'LL SEND HER AN-OTHER ONE!



I'LL BRING YOU ANOTHER CHEST RIGHT AWAY AND PICK UP THE OTHER ONE!

SEND HER ANOTHER CHEST!

BUT, DARLING, YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY COME HERE UNTIL THIS EVENING! MY WONDERFUL SURPRISE MUST WAIT!

SUCH A LOT OF FUSS OVER A SILLY OLD CHEST AT A TIME LIKE THIS! CLICK!

YOU'LL HAVE TO SEND HER ANOTHER CHEST! SOMETHING INTERESTING, TRICKY-- TO DIVERT HER ATTENTION!



YOU! WHO ARE YOU ANYWAY? WHY ARE YOU MEDDLING IN MY AFFAIRS?

YOU BOUGHT ME! I AM YOUR PUNISHING GENIE FROM THE CHEST OF THE MANDARIN KUO!



I TELL YOU I
DON'T BELIEVE
IN GENII !

WHO OPENED THE LID OF THE
CHEST, THEN? HOW DID YOU KNOW
ABOUT THE SECRET COMPARTMENT
INSIDE, UNLESS I TOLD YOU ?



WHATEVER YOU ARE,
I WON'T HAVE YOU
TELLING ME WHAT
TO DO !

I'VE JUST BEGUN TELLING
YOU WHAT TO DO, AUGUST
RIDLEY !



THE ONLY VOICE I OBEY IS
MY OWN! I'M FREE / MY
DESTINY DEPENDS ON
ME, ALONE !

UNTIL FATE DECREED
THAT YOU MEET A GENIE !



SEND ANNABELLE ANOTHER
CHEST, AUGUST RIDLEY !

I WON'T / NEVER!
DO YOU HEAR ?



VIOLENT, HALF CRAZED BY THE SUDDEN
REALIZATION THAT HE INDEED HAD
BOUGHT THE GENIE OF KUQ, RIDLEY
SLASHED AT HIS NEMESIS, UNTIL HE
DROPPED FROM EXHAUSTION. AND
THEN...

I BEG YOUR PARDON,
SIR/ IS THERE SOME-
THING I CAN DO ?

S-SEND
MISS DEXTER
THE TEAK AND
GOLD CHEST
OUT IN THE
SHOP!



SWIFTLY NOW, THE FURIOUS
SCHEME OF THE GENIE MOVED
FORWARD WITH INEXORABLE LOGIC.
OUTSIDE THE CURIO SHOP.

ONCE MORE HE'S TRYING TO
DOUBLE-CROSS ME! BUT NO ONE
FOOLS JEREMY HALL A
SECOND TIME !



YES, JEREMY HALL CONCLUDED THAT
RIDLEY WAS MOVING ALL HIS PORT-
ABLE ASSETS TO A HIDEAWAY !

I'LL TAIL THE TRUCK! AND
TONIGHT I CRACK THE STRONG
BOX WITH A LITTLE NITRO
AND GET EVERYTHING!



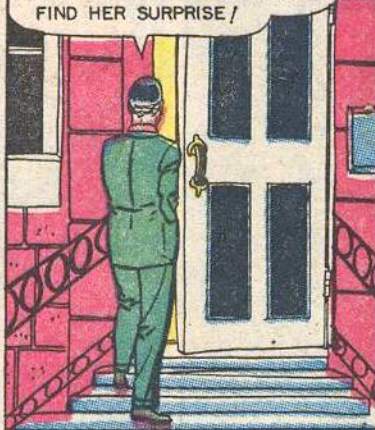
THAT NIGHT, SHORTLY BEFORE NINE...

I'VE LOST HIM! I'VE GIVEN THE GENIE THE SLIP! I'M FREE... SAFE!



AND EXACTLY AT NINE...

THAT'S STRANGE! THE DOOR IS OPEN AND NO ONE ANSWERS THE BELL... AS IF ANNABELLE HAD LEFT IT OPEN FOR ME TO WALK IN AND FIND HER SURPRISE!



OH! OH! /
ARRGH!

THAT SOUND... AS IF SOMEONE WERE CHOKING TO DEATH!

OR BEING CHOKED TO DEATH, AUGUST RIDLEY!



IN THE RICHLY FURNISHED STUDY WHERE, IRONICALLY, ONLY THE ANTIQUE CHEST OF KUO WAS STORED...

I'LL FIND RIDLEY'S STRONG BOX, EVEN IF YOU WOULDN'T TELL ME WHERE IT IS!

GO IN, RIDLEY... YOU'LL HAVE TO KILL HIM! NOW!



HALL, YOU MADMAN! YOU'VE KILLED MY HEIRESS!

AND NOW YOU, RIDLEY!



PERFECT, RIDLEY!

NO! WE'LL BOTH BE KILLED! THE NITRO...



ONLY THE GENIE KNEW HOW INEVITABLE IT WAS THAT JEREMY HALL WOULD BE CARRYING A VIAL OF NITRO-GLYCERIN TO OPEN RIDLEY'S "STRONG BOX"!

BOOM



MIRACULOUSLY, RIDLEY WAS NOT INJURED IN THE EXPLOSION THAT KILLED HALL / AND BEFORE THE DUST FROM THE EXPLOSION HAD SETTLED, RIDLEY HAD DISCOVERED WHY IT WAS ANNABELLE WOULD NOT SEE HIM UNTIL LATE THAT EVENING /

HER LAWYER HAS BEEN HERE / AS HER WEDDING PRESENT TO ME, SHE'S HAD EVERY CENT SHE OWNS TRANSFERRED TO MY NAME / THE DOCUMENT IS SIGNED -- I'M RICH /



DO YOU SEE THIS, GENIE? HAVEN'T YOU FORGOTTEN SOMETHING? JUST ONE THING THAT MIGHT CHANGE EVERYTHING?

DO YOU SEE THIS, GENIE? HAVEN'T YOU FORGOTTEN SOMETHING? JUST ONE THING THAT MIGHT CHANGE EVERYTHING?



ONE THING ALONE / AND UPON THAT DEPENDED THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TRIUMPH AND DISASTER FOR RIDLEY /

THE DIARY... I WROTE IN THE DIARY THAT I'D KILL HER FOR HER MONEY /



I'LL DESTROY THE DIARY / NO ONE WILL SEE WHAT I WROTE /

YOU AREN'T DESTROYING ANYTHING, MISTER-- NOT AFTER WHAT HAPPENED HERE!



ONE MINUTE, HEIR TO MORE THAN ONE AND A HALF MILLION DOLLARS / AND THE NEXT MINUTE, RIDLEY FOUND THAT HIS HERITAGE HAD CHANGED TO AN INEVITABLE HANGMAN'S NOOSE /

I DID NOT KILL HER / IT WAS A TRICK OF THE GENIE / THE GENIE OF KUO /

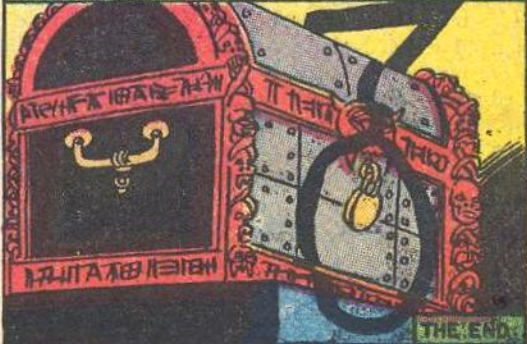


TELL THEM, GENIE / TELL THEM IT WAS ALL YOUR TRICK / TELL THEM I AM INNOCENT /

IT IS FATE THAT ONLY A VERY FEW PEOPLE ALIVE CAN KNOW AND BELIEVE IN GENII, AUGUST RIDLEY / FAREWELL /



AND WITH THIS, THE GENIE WAS SEEN NO MORE / AND AUGUST RIDLEY, THE MAN WHO SCOFFED AT ANTIQUE SPIRITS, WAS FINALLY FREED FROM THE AVENGING FURY WHO DIRECTED HIS LIFE REMORSELESSLY, STEP BY STEP FROM THE TIME RIDLEY OPENED THE CHEST UNTIL THE VERY LAST AND AWFUL INSTANT ON THE SCAFFOLD WHEN THE HANGMAN'S NOOSE JERKED TIGHT AROUND HIS THROAT /



HEIRESS OF THE RUE DE SANGRE

That night while all of Paris was celebrating the French version of our own Fourth of July, a man balanced precariously on a bit of roof that led to a lighted, open window on the top floor of Number 17 Rue de Sangre. Half way to the window opening, the man decided that he could not make it. "Marlene," he called. "Marlene, help me! I shall fall . . . The man's voice rose in terror. He tried to turn around. Just as a pretty young woman appeared at the window, he fell.

"Andre," the young woman cried. But Andre had hit the ground five stories below by the time his name was spoken.

More than a month before this night, Marlene Nemour had left her home in the most fashionable part of Paris and had taken an artist's attic studio. "I shall paint," she announced. "I refuse to spend my life uselessly like the rest of the Nemours." To which her uncle and guardian had replied that the Rue de Sangre was no place for a Frenchwoman of nobility. It was a workman's street. "Also," Marlene sharply reminded her uncle, "it is a street made famous by the blood of beheaded French noblemen who never learned the meaning of work until after the Revolution." Andre, Marlene's brother was loud in his protests. She was betraying the family honor and he would never rest until he had plucked her out of her shameful garret and brought her home again. But for more than a month, Marlene had held out against both brother and uncle. To them, her door was always locked and her ear deaf. And so it had happened that Andre had had the drunken inspiration to come to his sister by way of the rooftop, to plead once again for her return home.

Thus, as a result of foolish Andre's stunt, for the first time in over 150 years, the blood of a French noble was this instant flowing down the gutter of the Rue de Sangre and into the sewer opening where it had spilled in torrents during the Revolutionary Reign of Terror. If it had not been for an awning over the sidewalk below, Andre would most certainly have been killed instead of lying now cut and unconscious. And yet, as events soon turned out, it might have been far better if Andre had bled less and died more quickly.

The next day, after paying her brother a visit in the hospital, Marlene saw a strange and fascinating sight in the street before her house—the figure of a huge man with a wooden leg and a hook in place of a hand which had been cut off. The man's clothes were ragged and dirty, exactly as if he had gone to bed 150 years ago without taking them off. When he raised his hat, the most astonishing thing of all was his face; it exactly duplicated pictures of M. de Sangre, the gory executioner who had given the street its name.

"Hello," hailed Marlene as the great hulk of a

man moved off down the street. But the man did not seem to hear. "Wait! Please, monsieur, I want to sketch you. For money." But even this last did not stop the man. He lowered himself into a sewer opening from which the grate had been removed and disappeared from sight!

"I must get him to pose for me," said Marlene to herself. "He has the most wonderful face I've seen in all Paris. Cruel and stiff . . . yes, that's it! Cruel and stiff like a devil revived from the dead." With this, Marlene, too, entered the sewer opening, climbed down an iron ladder and descended into damp darkness to the bottom.

Seeing a light in the distance, Marlene started toward it. At a turn in the sewer not more than a hundred yards distant, she stopped abruptly. "I heard you, mademoiselle. But I do not wish to pose for an artist." The man she was looking for stood not more than an arm's length away. "I do not wish to be bothered. I am looking for some people I have never seen and the time I have is all too short."

"But I can help," cried Marlene impulsively. "If you will only pose for one drawing, I shall help you find these people. I am Marlene Nemour and I have friends who can help . . ." Marlene did not finish what she was going to say; she saw the strange expression that came over the man before her.

"Your name is Nemour?" he asked.

"Ye-es," she said.

"Are there many Nemours living now in Paris, Nemours who no longer are afraid of the guillotine and the anger of the citizens of Paris?"

"Three," Marlene's mouth was dry. Her voice was a whisper. She backed slowly away from the man with the wooden leg and the right arm that ended in a sharp steel hook. The arm with the steel hook drew back slowly . . . "My brother, my uncle, and I . . . we are the only ones."

"M. de Sangre is pleased to meet you after all these years!" The hook drew back swiftly and lashed forward. The blow missed her neck by the smallest fraction of an inch! M. de Sangre's wooden leg slipped on the wet stones and he fell to his knees. Marlene screamed. And then she fled.

In the darkness, she lost her way. A solid wall blocked her flight. And not far away she heard the rapid and uneven thudding of the man who was following her. "Marlene Nemour!" M. de Sangre's voice boomed like a cannon in the vaulted sewer channel. And then suddenly a hand grabbed hold of hers and she was being dragged toward daylight and the opening of the sewer through which she had come.

For a time neither the young man who had led her to safety nor Marlene spoke. In her studio he made each of them a cup of chocolate and waited quietly.

"My name's Carver," he said. "Norman Carver. Writer. I was down there looking for background material for an historical novel about this part of town. Rather lucky my interests range all the way down to sewers."

"I don't expect anyone to believe me, of course, but the man who was after me is actually a dead man come to life after 150 years!" Marlene tried not to sound hysterical.

"Paris is an old city. Many strange things have happened here," the young writer had a kind voice. He was not smiling.

Marlene told him the story then, a grim story of another time in French history; "He is de Sangre, I'm sure! Somehow the man who gave this street its name has returned to life and Vengeance. You see, it was an ancestor of mine, Destin Nemour, who was the cause of de Sangre being beheaded. Destin was hated by the people almost as much as the king himself and de Sangre had saved him as a kind of landmark in his executions. But Destin cheated the crowd and escaped right under their very noses. The public was furious. Almost with one voice they demanded the head of de Sangre in the place of Destin's! And so it was that the executioner himself became a victim. But before the guillotine fell, de Sangre swore that the blade that removed his head would never completely end his life—that only fire and burning could kill the master of the guillotine. Some day the blood of a French nobleman would restore his head to his shoulders and life to his body and he would return to exterminate every single Nemour from the face of Paris." Breathlessly Marlene finished her story: "And he has returned because last night my own brother fell into the street from the roof. His blood flowed into the sewer opening where the head and body of de Sangre were dumped so long ago!"

"It is hard to believe, perhaps," said the writer, "but not impossible."

Indeed it was hard to believe, but only one day later every paper in Paris headlined this one indisputable fact: TWO NEMOURS MURDERED BY MYSTERY KILLER. To Marlene, locked in her own studio where she trembled with fear at every sound, there was no mystery at all about the killer—except when he would strike next. Both her brother and her uncle had died in the same fashion, their throats slashed as if by a sharp hook. The police scoffed at the idea of de Sangre returning from the dead, but Marlene remembered the dull gleam of the metal hook as it had slashed toward her own throat.

Three days passed in torment for Marlene and three sleepless nights filled with shadows. She always kept her gun in her hand, but after three nights without sleep she could no longer hold even the gun. The young writer, who alone believed in the menace of de Sangre, came to see her often, but she always sent him away saying that she could protect herself as long as she could hold the gun. But

at last, she felt that she had to sleep. And when she would close her eyes, de Sangre would come to finish his vengeance against the Nemours.

"I shall not stay here to be killed in my sleep," she decided at last. "It is better that I go now in search of de Sangre and try to kill him!" She gripped her old-fashioned pistol tightly and left her studio.

The iron ladder that led into the dampness and gloom of the sewer was cold. Marlene shivered. Carefully, she inched her way along the stone wall in the direction where she had first come upon de Sangre. She wondered if the executioner was waiting, if he was behind her or ahead of her with his horrible hooked hand ready to strike. She seemed to have felt her way for miles when all at once de Sangre's voice spoke.

"Good evening, mademoiselle! I have been expecting you for some time!" De Sangre stood not 20 feet from her, holding high his gasoline lantern which turned blackness into blinding light.

Marlene pointed her gun and shot. She shot three times, but with each report de Sangre's smile only broadened. "Bullets?" he inquired blandly. "You forget I am the executioner de Sangre."

Once again Marlene pointed her gun and fired. But when she saw her last shot puncture the center of de Sangre's vest without effect, she knew that de Sangre spoke the truth. The gun fell from her nerveless fingers and all the strength left her legs. And then suddenly an arm was holding her up and a hand was picking up her gun. The gun went off once more close to her side and in an instant the light of the gasoline lantern became immense. It spilled brilliantly onto the walls and into the water of the sewer. It spilled onto de Sangre and for one second Marlene saw his face framed in intense light. It was the face of a man in mortal pain, a man who was burning to death. The legend was true: fire was destroying forever the bloody executioner of the Rue de Sangre! Darkness closed in on Marlene. She fainted.

"When I saw the door of your studio open, and you and the gun gone, I knew you had started for de Sangre," Carver told Marlene in the hospital later in the day.

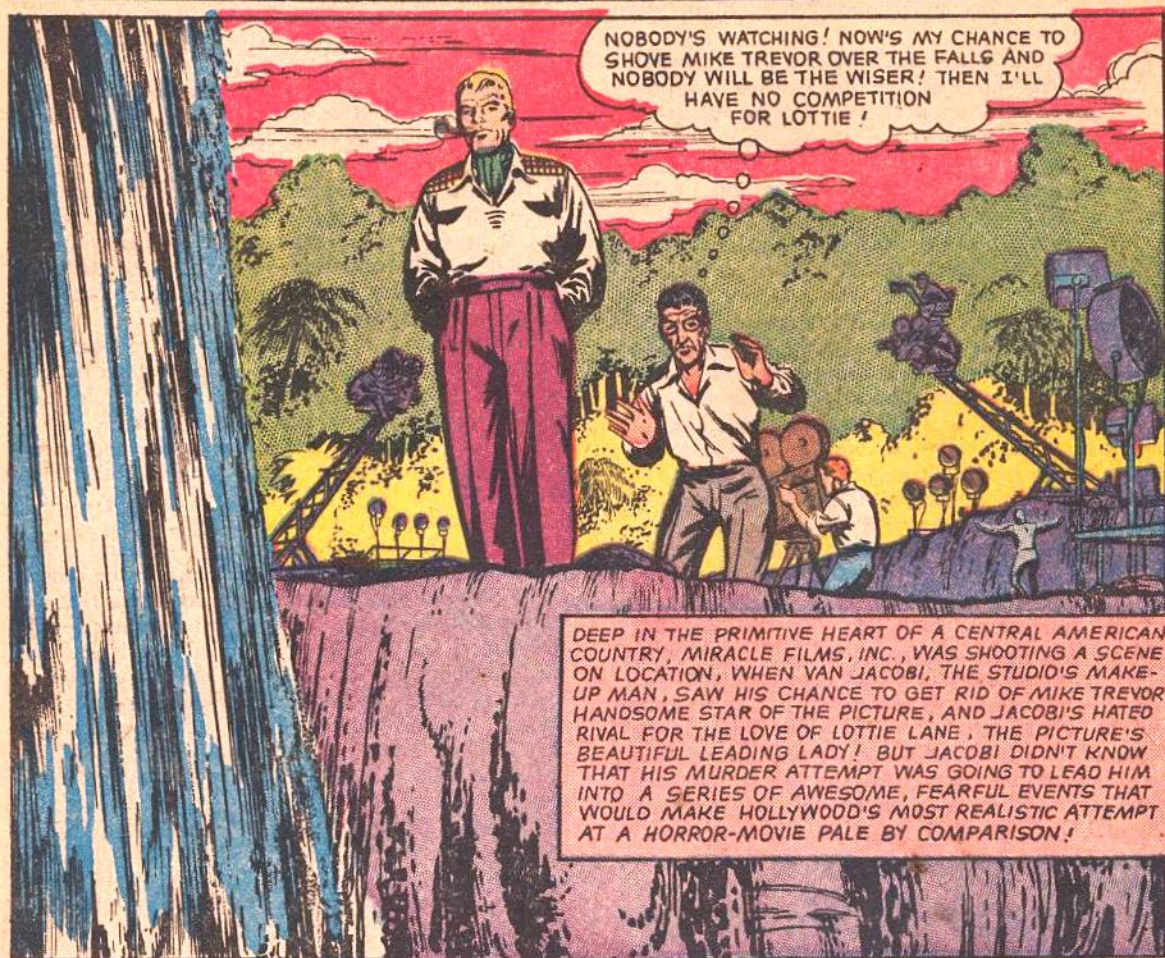
"What happened to him?" Marlene took the writer's hand and pressed it in a frightened way to her cheek.

"There are only signs of fire and an explosion. Not a trace of de Sangre. The police will only believe that nothing has happened that isn't a writer's wild fantasy." Carver laughed. And then he became serious. "And in the future that's all it will be. Still, even the strangest experience ought to have a reasonable ending. Mr. and Mrs. Norman Carver, who will live happily and quietly with pen and paint brush for ever afterward!"

"That is a most believable ending," Marlene said. "Believable enough for practically anyone!"

THE END

THE BREW OF FRIGHTFUL FACES



SUDDENLY, TREVOR STOOPED OVER, AND...



GOOD GRIEF! IT'S JACOBI! HE'S ACCIDENTALLY LOST HIS BALANCE AND TUMBLED INTO THE FALLS!



BY SOME MIRACLE, I WASN'T SMASHED TO DEATH ON THE ROCKS! IF I CAN REACH THOSE ROCKS, BEYOND THE FALL OF THE WATER, MAYBE I'LL LIVE THROUGH THIS ORDEAL!



SOME SORT OF CAVE HERE, BENEATH THE WATERFALL! PERHAPS IT WILL LEAD ME OUT INTO THE OPEN!



THE CAVE LED INTO AN UPWARD-CLIMBING TUNNEL! IF ONLY IT ISN'T DEAD END, I'LL BE ALL RIGHT!



I'VE COME OUT IN SOME SORT OF CLOSED-IN CANYON! WHA...? AND THERE'S SOME SORT OF NATIVE CEREMONY GOING ON HERE! WONDER WHAT THEY'RE UP TO?



AS JACOBI WATCHED, HE SAW...

I, MARU, HIGH PRIEST OF THE LOST TRIBE OF THE AZTECI, SPRINKLE DEVIL'S DUST INTO THE BREW OF ETERNAL PUNISHMENT AND PROCLAIM IT READY FOR THE CULPRIT! BRING HIM ON!



STOP STRUGGLING, EMZI! YOU HAVE SINNED AGAINST THE LAWS OF THE TRIBE! NOW YOU MUST SUFFER THE PENAL RITES! BRING HIM CLOSE!

AAIIIEEE!
NO! NOT THE
LIQUID MASK
OF SATAN!



NOW! YOU WILL FOREVER APPEAR SUCH A THING OF HORROR AND EVIL, THAT YOU WILL NEVER AGAIN BE ABLE TO COMMIT CRIMES AGAINST YOUR FELLOW MAN!

NO! NO!
ARGHHHHH!



AS VAN JACOBI WATCHED THE NATIVE PUNISHMENT RITE IN UNBELIEVABLE TERROR AND FASCINATION, HE SAW THAT, AS EMZI, THE CULPRIT, CLAWED AT THE STICKY, STEAMING FLUID UPON HIS FEATURES, A STRANGE THING HAPPENED...

MY FACE IS CHANGING! I CANNOT KEEP FROM CLAWING AT THE BURNING, STICKY LIQUID -- YET I KNOW THAT I AM CHANGING MY OWN FEATURES INTO GHASTLY SHAPES! EEEYAAAH!

HOW FRIGHTFUL! THAT NATIVE CONCOCTION MUST HAVE DONE SOMETHING TO THE BONE STRUCTURE OF HIS FACE, MADE IT PLIABLE, LIKE PUTTY, SO THAT IT TWISTED AND BULGED INTO WHATEVER SHAPE HIS OWN CLAWING FINGERS FORMED IT!

SUDDENLY...

AN OUTSIDER FROM THE MODERN WORLD, SPYING ON US! COME! WE TAKE YOU TO MARU THE HIGH PRIEST!

WAIT A MINUTE! I'M NOT DOING ANY HARM! DON'T-- DON'T HURT ME!



WE FOUND THIS CREATURE FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD SPYING ON OUR PENAL RIGHTS, O POWERFUL AND ALMIGHTY MARU!

AH! THEN HE SAW HOW THE BREW OF ETERNAL PUNISHMENT WORKS!

BUT WHAT YOU DO NOT KNOW, MAN FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD, IS THAT, A FEW MOMENTS AFTER THE CULPRIT RAN OFF SCREAMING, THE BONE STRUCTURE OF HIS FACE ONCE MORE SOLIDIFIED, AND THAT HIS FACE WILL REMAIN FROZEN IN THE FRIGHTENING, HORRIBLE SHAPE INTO WHICH IT WAS TWISTED!



NOBODY FROM THE OUTSIDE HAS EVER WITNESSED OUR SECRET CEREMONIES! LOCK HIM UP IN THE DUNGEON UNTIL I CAN DECIDE ON SOME FITTING PUNISHMENT!

LET ME GO! I'LL NEVER COME BACK AGAIN! I DIDN'T MEAN ANY HARM!

I AM SIRI, SERVING AS TRIBAL JAILER! YOU ARE SO STRANGE LOOKING! WHERE DO YOU COME FROM?

THIS GIRL SEEMS FRIENDLY! MAYBE I CAN TRICK HER INTO LETTING ME ESCAPE FROM THIS HADES!



SHE IS YOUNG AND PRETTY, AND NO DOUBT VAIN! MAYBE THIS POCKET MAKE-UP KIT I ALWAYS CARRY WILL INTRIGUE HER!

WHAT IS THAT SHINY THING THAT CASTS A REFLECTION LIKE STILL, CLEAR WATER?



IT SHOWS YOUR IMAGE AS YOU LOOK NOW! LET ME APPLY SOME MAGIC BEAUTY TREATMENT AND YOU WILL BECOME THE MOST BEAUTIFUL GIRL IN YOUR TRIBE!



AFTER JACOBI HAD SKILLFULLY APPLIED THEATRICAL MAKE-UP...

IT IS TRULY MAGIC! IT HAS TRANSFORMED ME INTO A DIFFERENT, MORE BEAUTIFUL GIRL!

YOU CAN HAVE THIS BOX OF MAGIC PAINTS, IF YOU WILL GET ME A SAMPLE OF THAT BREW OF ETERNAL PUNISHMENT AND THEN HELP ME TO ESCAPE THIS PLACE!



SIRI COULDN'T RESIST THE TEMPTATION OF THE MAKE-UP KIT, AND...

I'LL SHOW YOU A SECRET EXIT FROM THIS HIDDEN CANYON! BUT WE MUST HURRY TO AVOID DETECTION!

AH! THERE SHOULD BE ENOUGH OF THIS HORRIBLE BREW FOR MY PURPOSES!



YOU ARE FREE NOW! BUT YOU MUST NOT TELL ANYBODY THE THINGS YOU'VE SEEN, NOR EVER COME BACK AGAIN!

DON'T WORRY! I WON'T!



HEY! WHAT KIND OF MAGIC IS THIS? THE GIRL HAS VANISHED! AND SO HAS THE EXIT WE USED!



LATER, BACK AT THE MOTION PICTURE COMPANY'S LOCATION CAMP...

BUT, I TELL YOU I WAS IN SUCH A CANYON! THERE WAS SUCH A TRIBE! I SAW THEM, TALKED TO THEM!

BUT YOU COULDN'T POSSIBLY, JACOBI! THE ONLY TRIBE IN THIS SECTION HAS BEEN EXTINCT FOR OVER A HUNDRED YEARS!





YOU CAN'T MAKE A LIAR AND A FOOL OUT OF ME IN FRONT OF LOTTIE! YOU STUPIDLY HAND-SOME IDIOT, I'LL FIX YOU!

EASY, JACOBI!



I'D BETTER NOT SAY ANY MORE! I DON'T WANT ANYONE TO BE SUSPICIOUS OF ME, LATER, WHEN THEY SEE WHAT HAPPENS TO TREVOR!

GO ON INTO YOUR TENT AND COOL OFF, JACOBI! TREVOR DIDN'T MEAN ANY HARM!



THIS BREW OF ETERNAL PUNISHMENT IS ALMOST HEATED AND READY NOW! MY MOMENT OF VENGEANCE OVER MIKE TREVOR IS AT HAND!



A LITTLE LATER...

I GOT A MESSAGE THAT YOU WANTED TO SEE ME, JACOBI, ABOUT SOME NEW MAKE-UP YOU WANTED TO TRY OUT!

YES! I BROUGHT IT FROM THAT SECRET CANYON YOU SAID DIDN'T EXIST--GOT IT FROM THAT TRIBE YOU SAID WAS LONG EXTINCT!



IT IS CALLED THE LIQUID MASK OF SATAN! HERE--TRY IT!

WHA...? EEYAAAAHH! I'M SCALDED!



NOW YOU WILL NO LONGER LORD IT OVER LESS HANDSOME MEN, TREVOR! YOU WILL FOREVER BE A WALKING HORROR! NO WOMAN WILL BE ABLE TO LOOK AT YOU WITHOUT SHUDDERING!

OOOOOHH! MY FACE! MY FACE!



LOTTIE! SOMETHING HORRIBLE HAS HAPPENED TO MY FACE! HELP ME!

I-- I CAN'T EVEN BEAR TO LOOK AT YOU!

LATER, AFTER TREVOR HAD COLLAPSED AND BEEN PUT IN THE INFIRMARY TENT

NOW, LOTTIE, YOU CAN NO LONGER LOVE TREVOR! PERHAPS I CAN TAKE HIS PLACE! I'VE ALWAYS LOVED YOU!

THAT'S A JOKE, JACOBI! I COULD NO MORE CARE FOR A LITTLE PIPSQUEAK LIKE YOU THAN I COULD FOR A FIELD MOUSE!



EVERYBODY THINKS THAT YOU'RE IN SOME WAY RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT HAPPENED TO POOR MIKE! GET OUT OF THE WAY, YOU LITTLE RAT! LET ME OUT OF HERE!

SO THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK OF ME! ALL MY PLANS, MY TROUBLE-- FOR NOTHING!



IF THAT'S THE CASE, THEN YOU, TOO, WILL GET THE SAME TREATMENT AS TREVOR! THIS MYSTIC BREW WILL MAKE YOUR FACE A THING OF HORROR!

NO! NO! LET ME GO!



YOU'VE GONE MAD!

WATCH OUT! THE TABLE'S TIPPED OVER! THE FACE-CHANGING BREW IS BEING SPILLED! LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE!



A FEW MINUTES LATER...

FROM WHAT LOTTIE TOLD US, JACOBI HAS BECOME A DANGEROUS MADMAN! WE'D BETTER-- LOOK! THERE HE IS! JACOBI! COME BACK HERE!

THEY'LL PUT ME IN IRONS! I'D BETTER RUN FOR IT!



THE SMALL SUPPLY OF THE BREW IS GONE! BUT I'LL GET MORE! I'LL GET EVEN WITH EVERYBODY IN THE CAMP FOR DOING THIS TO ME! I'LL GIVE THEM ALL THE LIQUID MASK OF SATAN!



I'LL GET BACK TO THE CANYON AND STEAL A BIG SUPPLY OF THE BREW WHILE THE AZTECI SLEEP!





THEY ARE ALL SLEEPING LIKE THE DEAD! IT WILL ONLY TAKE ME A FEW MOMENTS TO FILL A COUPLE OF THESE URNS AND BE GONE!



BUT A MOMENT LATER, JACOBI WAS CAUGHT BY SURPRISE, AND

THE OUTSIDER SEEMS FOND OF THE BREW OF ETERNAL PUNISHMENT! LET HIM BATHE IN IT!

NO! NO! EEEYOWWW!



AND SO FATE DECREED THAT JACOBI SUFFER THE SAME HORRIBLE TREATMENT THAT HE HAD ADMINISTERED TO TREVOR!

LET ME GO! YOU ARE TWISTING MY ARMS AND LEGS, MY WHOLE BODY INTO HIDEOUS DISFIGUREMENT!



LET HIM DEPART! HE HAS SUFFERED RETRIBUTION ENOUGH!

FOR SEVERAL DAYS, JACOBI HID IN THE JUNGLE. THEN, HUNGRY, SICK WITH FEVER, HE RETURNED TO THE CAMP WHERE THE HORRIFIED REACTION OF THE OTHERS DROVE HIM INTO A BERSERK, MURDEROUS RAGE



EVERYBODY SCREAMS AND RUNS FROM ME! I'LL KILL YOU ALL!

HE'S BECOME A MADDENED BEAST! THERE'S ONLY ONE THING TO DO!



HE-- HE'S DEAD! BUT DEATH HAS BEEN KIND TO HIM-- CHANGED HIM ONCE AGAIN FROM A CREATURE OF HORROR TO A HUMAN BEING!



LATER, IN THE INFIRMARY TENT...

WITH JACOBI'S DEATH, YOU BECAME YOUR HANDSOME, NORMAL SELF ONCE MORE, MIKE! I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT, BUT I'M THANKFUL!

EVIL WAS ROOTED DEEPLY IN JACOBI! BUT NOW THAT HE'S DEAD, WE'LL HAVE NO MORE TROUBLE!

the END

An Amazing NEW HEALTH SUPPORTER BELT

For men in their 30's, 40's, 50's
who want to
LOOK SLIMMER
and
FEEL YOUNGER



POSTURE BAD?
Got a 'Bay Window'?



DO YOU ENVY MEN
who can
'KEEP ON THEIR FEET'?

and then he got a
"CHEVALIER"...



YOU NEED A
"CHEVALIER"!

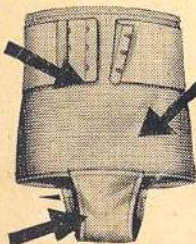
DOES a bulging "bay window" make you look and feel years older than you really are? Then here, at last, is the answer to your problem! "Chevalier", the wonderful new adjustable health supporter belt is scientifically constructed to help you look and feel years younger!

The CHEVALIER

LIFTS AND FLATTENS YOUR BULGING "BAY WINDOW"

Why go on day after day with an "old-man's" mid-section bulge... or with a tired back that needs posture support? Just see how "Chevalier" brings you vital control where you need it most! "Chevalier" has a built-in strap. You adjust the belt the way you want. Presto! Your "bay-window" bulge is lifted in... flattened out—yet you feel wonderfully comfortable!

FRONT ADJUSTMENT
Works quick as a flash! Simply adjust the strap and presto! The belt is perfectly adjusted to your greatest comfort!



TWO-WAY S-T-R-E-T-C-H WONDER CLOTH
Firmly holds in your flabby abdomen yet it s-t-r-e-t-c-h-e-s as you breathe, bend, stoop, after meals, etc.

DETACHABLE POUCH

Air-cooled! Scientifically designed and made to give wonderful support and protection!

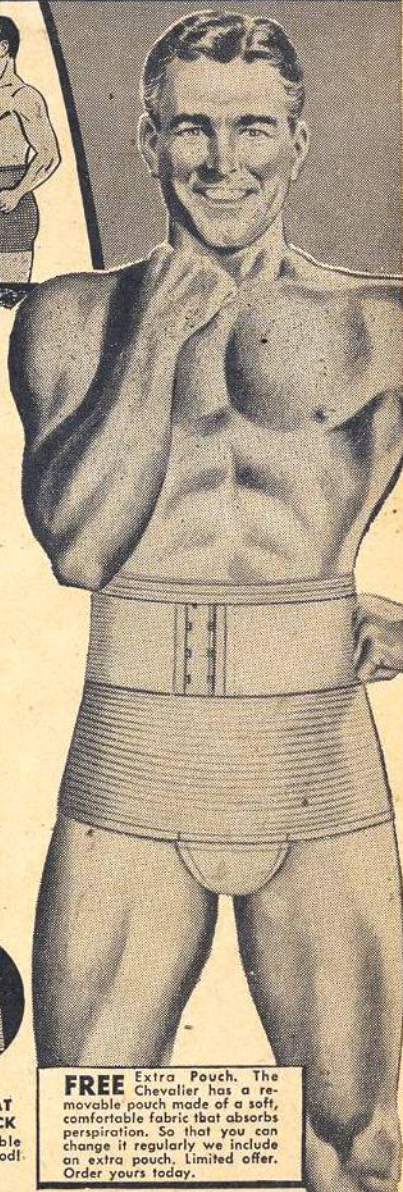
Healthful, Enjoyable Abdominal Control

It's great! You can wear "Chevalier" all day long. Will not bind or make you feel constricted. That's because the two-way s-t-r-e-t-c-h cloth plus the front adjustment bring you personalized fit. The "Chevalier" is designed according to scientific facts of healthful posture control. It's made by experts to give you the comfort and healthful "lift" you want. Just see all the wonderful features below. And remember—you can get the "Chevalier" on **FREE TRIAL**. Mail the coupon right now!



Rear View
FITS SNUG AT SMALL OF BACK
Firm, comfortable support. Feels good!

FREE Extra Pouch. The Chevalier has a removable pouch made of a soft, comfortable fabric that absorbs perspiration. So that you can change it regularly we include an extra pouch. Limited offer. Order yours today.



FREE TRIAL OFFER

1. You risk nothing! Just mail coupon—be sure to give name and address, also waist measure, etc. — and mail TODAY!



2. Try on the "Chevalier". Adjust belt the way you want. See how your bulging "bay window" looks streamlined... how comfortable you feel. How good it is!



3. Wear the "Chevalier" for 10 whole days if you want to! Wear it to work, evenings, while bowling, etc. The "Chevalier" must help you look and feel "like a million" or you can send it back! See offer in coupon!



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